

Message Text

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SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

REF: STATE 025998

1. FOLLOWING ARE EXAMPLES OF KNOWN INSTANCES WHERE AMMO/FUEL SHORTAGES HAVE OBLIGED RETRENCHMENT OR OTHER RESTRAINING ACTION ON PART OF THE RVNAF:

A. A LONG-RANGE RECONNAISSANCE PATROL (LRRP) OPERATING IN CENTRAL VIETNAM LOCATED LARGE COMMUNIST TROOP MOVEMENT AND CALLED FOR ARTILLERY. AT THE SAME TIME THE PATROL WAS DISCOVERED AND FORCED TO WITHDRAW. UNDER CURRENT JGS RULES TO CONSERVE AMMO, ARTILLERY FIRE MUST BE OBSERVED. SINCE PATROL COULD NOT OBSERVE FIRE, REQUEST FOR ARTILLERY WAS DENIED AND NVA TROOPS ESCAPED UNSCATHED.

B. ONE DIVISION COMMANDER REPORTS THAT LACK OF SUFFICIENT FLYING TIME FOR OBSERVATION AIRCRAFT TO CONDUCT ADEQUATE RECONNAISSANCE IS MAKING IT VERY DIFFICULT TO LOCATE COMMUNIST FORCES. BECAUSE FUEL IS SHORT, FLYING HOURS HAVE BEEN DRASTICALLY REDUCED. CURRENTLY, THE DIVISION HAS THE USE OF ONE AIRCRAFT FOR THREE HOURS PER DAY.

C. THE REDUCTIONS IN THE ALLOCATION OF FUEL AND THE FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR SPARE PARTS HAVE, FORCED DRASTIC REDUCTIONS IN ALLOCATION OF FLYING TIME TO VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE. WHEN FLYING HOURS

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WERE DIVIDED OUT BY TYPES OF AIRCRAFT, IT WAS FOUND THAT 11 SQUADRONS

OF FIGHTER, TRANSPORT, GUNSHIP AND UTILITY AIRCRAFT HAD TO BE GROUNDED.

FURTHER, THOSE SQUADRONS KEPT ACTIVE WERE FLOWN AT OVERALL 50-60 PERCENT OF PREVIOUS RATES. IN THE CASE OF SOME AIRCRAFT, FOR EXAMPLE CH-47 HELICOPTERS AND F-5A FIGHTERS, FLYING HOUR RATES ARE INSUFFICIENT TO MAINTAIN SAFE, LET ALONE COMBAT EFFECTIVE, PILOT PROFICIENCY. REDUCED FLYING HOURS FOR HELICOPTERS HAVE FORCED CESSATION OF AERIAL RESUPPLY OF MANY TACTICAL OUTPOSTS, WHERE DISTANCES AND GROUND TRANSPORT DIFFICULTIES ARE PROHIBITIVE; THE VIRTUAL ELIMINATION OF SIZEABLE HELIBORNE OPERATIONS (EVEN OF COMPANY SIZE), AND ELIMINATION OF ALL BUT ESSENTIAL HELIBORNE INSERTION/EXTRACTION OF "LONG-RANGE RECONNAISSANCE PATROLS."

D. IN THE PROSECUTION OF THE VIETNAMESE WAR, QUICK REACTION TO DEFEND ISOLATED OUTPOSTS AND POSITIONS HAS ALWAYS BEEN VITAL. THE MOST EFFECTIVE TACTIC HAS BEEN TO SUMMON FLARESHIPS OR GUNSHIPS AND ALSO SUPPORT THE OUTPOST WITH ARTILLERY. UNDER CURRENT RESTRAINTS THERE ARE NO AIRCRAFT DEDICATED ONLY TO DROPPING FLARES AND THE NUMBER OF GUNSHIPS HAS BEEN DRASTICALLY REDUCED. THE REMAINING GUNSHIPS, AC-119KS CARRY SOME FLARES, BUT THIS REDUCES THEIR AMMO CARRYING ABILITY. THE USE OF ARTILLERY IS ALSO LIMITED, AS A CONSEQUENCE OUTPOSTS ARE BEING OVERRUN AND THE MORALE OF SOLDIERS CALLED UPON TO DEFEND POSITIONS KNOWING THAT SUPPORT WILL NOT BE FORTHCOMING HAS INEVITABLY SUFFERED.

E. DUE TO THE REDUCTION OF FUNDS, OF WHICH AMMUNITION AND FUEL CUTS ARE A LARGE PART, IT HAS BEEN NECESSARY TO CUT VIETNAMESE NAVY COASTAL SURVEILLANCE FORCES BY 25 PERCENT AND TO REDUCE RIVERINE GROUPS FROM 43 TO 28, AT A COST IN SECURITY OF POPULATION AND TERRITORY PARTICULARLY IN THE DELTA.

F. IN THE DELTA, A NAVAL STATION WHICH HAS BEEN UNDER ATTACK ALMOST DAILY SINCE 6 DECEMBER 1974 IS PERMITTED TO FIRE ONLY ONE ROUND OF NAVAL GUN FIRE WHEN THE PERIMETER ALARM SIGNALING AN ATTACK GOES OFF, THUS FAR, THE NAVY HAS SUFFERED 17 KIA AND 57 WIA AT THIS BASE DUE TO SHORTAGE OF AMMUNITION TO KEEP THE ENEMY AT A SAFE DISTANCE.

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G. THE VNN'S LACK OF CONCUSSION HAND GRENADES AS A PROTECTIVE DEVICE AGAINST UNDERWATER SAPPERS IS GIVEN AS A REASON FOR THE RECENT LOSS OF TWO COMMERCIAL SHIPS, TWO NAVY PCFS AND ONE TUG. ALL SUNK BY EXPLOSIVES ATTACHED BY FROGMEN SAPPERS.

2. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CORRUPTION PROBLEM

THE POSSIBLE MISUSE OR MISAPPROPRIATION OF US-SUPPLIED MATERIEL IS

NOT NOW A SERIOUS PROBLEM IN VIETNAM. THE REDUCTION IN MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND THE VITAL NEED TO MAKE EVERY ROUND OF AMMUNITION AND DROP OF FUEL COUNT IN ORDER TO MEET THE GROWING COMMUNIST THREAT, HAS LED THE JOINT GENERAL STAFF TO ESTABLISH STRINGENT MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY CONTROLS ON ALL MILITARY MATERIEL. THESE PROCEDURES ARE WORKING WELL AND SUPPLY MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY ON THE PART OF THE VIETNAMESE HAS PROGRESSED TO THE POINT WHERE IT COMPARES FAVORABLY WITH US FORCES SUPPLY MANAGEMENT UNDER SIMILAR CONDITIONS. VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES ARE PROMPT TO INVESTIGATE ANY CHARGE OF MISUSE OF MATERIEL. WE CERTAINLY KNOW OF NO GENERAL ABUSES ASSOCIATED WITH US-SUPPLIED MATERIAL OR EQUIPMENT. WE WOULD SAY THAT IF THERE IS CORRUPTION, IT IS CERTAINLY NOT OF A NATURE OR ON A SCALE WHICH AFFECTS THE FIGHTING CAPABILITY OF THE RVNAF. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO PRECISE WAY TO COMPARE LEVELS OF ALLEGED CORRUPTION, THE FACT THAT THERE IS SIGNIFICANTLY LESS LOOSELY CONTROLLED US MATERIEL AVAILABLE IN VIETNAM NOW THAN IN THE YEARS OF THE US PRESENCE, LEADS TO THE CONCLUSION THAT ANY CORRUPTION INVOLVING THIS MATERIEL MUST ALSO HAVE DECLINED. CERTAINLY THE VIETNAMESE KNOW THEY CANNOT AFFORD THE LUXURY OF MISUSING MILITARY AID WHEN THEY ARE FIGHTING FOR THEIR LIVES. IT WOULD BE FOLLY, OF COURSE, TO STATE THAT THERE IS NO MISAPPROPRIATION OF SMALL QUANTITIES OF FUEL OR OTHER SMALL ITEMS. HOWEVER, IT IS FAR LESS THAN TWO YEARS AGO AND IS NOT A SERIOUS PROBLEM. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT IN RECENT MONTHS THERE HAVE BEEN ACCELERATED EFFORTS TO CONTROL CORRUPTION IN THE MILITARY. THREE CORPS COMMANDERS, TWO BRIGADIER GENERALS AND 377 OTHER OFFICERS HAVE BEEN RELIEVED, RETIRED OR SUBJECT TO DISCIPLINARY ACTION FOR, AMONG OTHER THINGS, CHARGES OF CORRUPTION. ON THE ISSUE OF THE "TRADITIONAL" TYPE OF CORRUPTION, ENDEMIC IN MOST ASIAN COUNTRIES, DEFINED IN A BROAD SENSE AS REAPING PERSONAL BENEFIT FROM ONE'S OFFICIAL POSITION ABOVE AND BEYOND WHAT IS NECESSARY TO ADEQUATELY CARE FOR ONE'S FAMILY, IT IS SIMPLY IMPOSSIBLE TO QUANTIFY CHANGE OVER THE YEARS. BECAUSE OF VIETNAM'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STRAITENED ECONOMIC SITUATION TRADITIONAL CORRUPTION HAS CERTAINLY BECOME LESS TOLERABLE, AND CONTROL OF CORRUPTION HAS BECOME A VERY LIVE PUBLIC ISSUE. CORRUPTION IS INCREASINGLY CONDEMNED IN THE PRESS AND BY POLITICAL LEADERS. THE GVN HAS TAKEN MANY STEPS WHICH ULTIMATELY MAY ELIMINATE THE CORRUPTION PROBLEM BY IMPROVING GOVERNMENT. AMONG THESE STEPS ARE THE "ADMINISTRATIVE REVOLUTION", "TAX REFORM," "LAND REFORM" ETC. HOWEVER, THE TRADITIONS OF CENTURIES ARE NOT CHANGED OVERNIGHT. MANY OF THE REFORMS ARE INCOMPLETE AND VENAL LEADERS AND OFFICIALS REMAIN. THE SALIENT POINT IS THAT WHETHER OR NOT THE LEVEL OF CORRUPTION HAS RISEN OR FALLEN OVER THE YEARS, THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLES' TOLERANCE OF GROSS CORRUPTION ON THE PART OF LEADERS AND OFFICIALS HAS SHARPLY DIMINISHED AND THEY ARE BRINGING PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT FOR ACTION TO WHICH THE GOVERNMENT IS RESPONDING. THIS IS A DRAMATIC CHANGE FOR THE BETTER.

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